

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

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PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5348
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IM
IATE 3727
USMTM RIYADH
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR
SECDEF WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 3434

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SA, YE
SUBJ: FIRST IDEAS OF YEAR PRESIDENT-TO-BE CONCERNING ARMS
PROGRAMS IN YEMEN

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT-TO-BE ALI ABDALLAH SALIH OUTLINES HIS
VIEWS OF U.S. AND SAUDI ROLES IN STRENGTHENING YEMENI DEFENSES.
END SUMMARY.

1. MILITARY ATTACHE RUSZKIEWICZ AND I CALLED ON CHIEF OF
STAFF AND DEPUTY COMMANDER IN CHIEF ALI ABDALLAH SALIH AT OUR
REQUEST ON 12 JULY. MEETING WAS INTENDED TO EXPAND OUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH SALIH AND, HOPEFULLY, GET TO KNOW HIM
BETTER, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF MANY AND GOOD REPORTS
THAT HE IS SHORTLY TO BE NAMED PRESIDENT OF YAR.
WE WISHED ALSO TO GIVE HIM SOME FURTHER REASONS FOR RE-
ASSURANCE THAT USG AND SAUDIS WERE WORKING TO HELP YEMEN
IN NUMBER OF WAYS.

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2. IN OUR FIRST MEETING ON 26 JUNE, DURING TWINAM VISIT,
WE PROMISED SALIH TO GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE WITH DETAILS ON THE MILITARY PROGRAM. ALTHOUGH
INSTRUCTIONS STILL LIMITED WHAT I COULD SAY TO YARG OFFICIALS
AND DETAILS ON US PROPOSALS STILL LACKING, I NEVERTHELESS
FELT I COULD MAKE FAIRLY GOOD SHOW OF SUPPORT WITH SALIH
AND THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO DO SO BEFORE HE IS SWEEP

INTO CEREMONIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MAELSTROM OF PRESIDENCY.

3. IN CONTRAST TO FIRST MEETING, SALIH WAS VERY MUCH MORE AT EASE WITH FOREIGNERS AND PROJECTED IMAGE OF COMMAND MUCH MORE CONFIDENTLY. HIS INTENSITY CAME THROUGH, HOWEVER, IN THE FIRST QUESTION HE ASKED: "WHAT IS THE UNITED STATES GOING TO DO TO SUPPORT YEMEN IN THE MILITARY FIELD?" I REPLIED BY PULLING SHEAF OF CABLES FROM MY POCKET AND READING EXCERPTS FROM THEM. I SAID THAT CABLES WERE ONLY SUPERFICIAL EVIDENCE OF THE ACTIVITY IN THE U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA IN PREPARING SOUND PLANS FOR A REINVIGORATED MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WHICH WOULD MAKE AN IMPACT IN BOTH THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF YEMEN. I SAID NOTHING ABOUT SPECIFIC KINDS OF EQUIPMENT, ACCELERATED DELIVERY SCHEDULES, PAY SUBSIDIES AND OTHER DETAILS BUT CONVEYED TO HIM AS FORCEFULLY AS I COULD THE AMERICAN AND SAUDI CONVICTION THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO MOVE QUICKLY TO ENSURE AN ADEQUATE DEFENSE POSTURE AGAINST SOUTH YEMEN.

4. WITHOUT MENTIONING NAMES OF ANY SAUDI LEADER, I TOLD SALIH THAT AMBASSADOR WEST HAD MET WITH TOP OFFICIALS IN THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE IN THE KINGDOM AND FOUND, IF ANYTHING, EVEN MORE DETERMINATION THAN ON THE U.S. SIDE TO PROVIDE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO YAR. I CONCLUDED BY SAYING I EXPECTED US PROPOSALS FOR HELP TO BE REVIEWED WITH SAUDIS WITHIN NEXT SECRET

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TWO WEEKS.

5. SALIH INTERRUPTED ME TO ASK QUESTION HE SAID WAS CRUCIAL TO YEMENI VIEW OF MILITARY MODERNIZATION IN YAR. "WILL US TAKE DIRECT ROLE IN HELPING US OR WILL IT TAKE INDIRECT ROLE THROUGH SAUDIS OR OTHERS?" I TOLD SALIH I THOUGHT WE WOULD DO BOTH BUT THAT IN OUR VIEW IT WAS MISTAKE TO SEPARATE WHAT SAUDI AND US DO, IMPORTANT THING WAS COORDINATION. THIS WAS TRILATERAL PROGRAM AND TO SUCCEED WOULD HAVE TO REMAIN SO.

6. SALIH WASN'T SATISFIED. HE SAID THAT IF IT WAS TRILATERAL, ANY MEETING SHOULD HAVE YEMENI REPRESENTATIVES AS WELL AS US AND SAUDI REPRESENTATIVES. MOREOVER, HE FELT THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS NEW AND GENERAL AGREEMENT ON PROCEDURES AND SUBSTANCE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE. HE SAID HE NEEDED "EVERYTHING -- TANKS, PLANES, ROCKETS, ARTILLERY." I SAID EXISTING PROGRAM WAS A GOOD ONE AND ASKED IF HE WERE ACQUAINTED WITH ALL THE DETAILS OF CONTRACT SIGNED BY HAMDY OVER TWO YEARS AGO. SALIH WAS A BIT TAKEN BACK AND I WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT THOSE CONTRACTS PROVIDED FOR EVERYTHING THAT WAS NEEDED BY SIX BRIGADES OF YEMENI FORCES. "WHERE ARE THE AMERICAN TANKS?" ASKED SALIH. I REPLIED ARMORED EQUIPMENT, BOTH

ARMORED PERSONNEL AND ARMORED CARS WERE TO COME FROM FRENCH NOT THE US UNDER THE ORIGINAL PLAN. I SAID THIS WAS A GOOD PLAN AS IT WOULD ALLOW YEMENIS TO DRAW ON EXISTING FACILITIES FOR MAINTENANCE IN SAUDI ARABIA. SALIH LAMENTED THAT "NO US EQUIPMENT" WAS ON HAND ALTHOUGH AGREEMENTS WERE SIGNED OVER TWO YEARS AGO. I POINTED OUT THAT EQUIPMENT WAS ONLY AS GOOD AS TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE OF UNITS THAT RECEIVED IT. GOOD START IN ANY YAR MILITARY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM WOULD BE TO MAKE USE OF TWO BATTALIONS OF ARTILLERY THAT HAD BEEN IN COUNTRY FOR MONTHS AND MONTHS ALONG WITH HUNDREDS OF VEHICLES.

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7. SALIH WAS NOT IN THE LEAST SATISFIED AND RETURNED TO THE QUESTION OF A DIRECT US ROLE. I SAID THE US WOULD CERTAINLY BE REPRESENTED THROUGH TRAINING TEAMS BUT WE SAW IT MATTER OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE FOR YEMENIS AND SAUDIS TO ESTABLISH PRIMARY RELATIONSHIP. SALIH ASKED IF THAT MEANT WE WOULD STAND BEHIND YEMEN AND THEIR SAUDI BROTHERS IF SOUTH ATTACKED. I REPLIED THAT I HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS POINT BUT DEFENSE OF YEMEN LIKE DEFENSE OF OTHER PENINSULAR STATES WAS CLEARLY RECOGNIZED BY ALL DECISION-MAKING LEVELS IN US TODAY AS VERY IMPORTANT. I CITED STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT CARTER TO PRESIDENT AL-ARASHI RE AMERICAN CONCERN FOR "YEMENI SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT."

8. SALIH SAID HE WANTED ME TO GET ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER US PREPARED TO TAKE DIRECT ROLE TO SIGN ANY

AGREEMENTS WITH YEMEN, DEAL DIRECTLY WITH YEMEN AND BACK THEM UP IN CASE OF DIFFICULTY. HE SAID HIS GOAL HAD TO BE IN ANY MILITARY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM A MODERN YEMENI ARMY WHICH WAS EQUIVALENT RPT EQUIVALENT OF SOUTH YEMENIS. HE SAID, "YOU KNOW HOW MANY TANKS AND PLANES THEY HAVE.

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YOU GAVE ME THE INFORMATION YOURSELF BUT THAT IS NOT THE THREAT WE FACE. WE FACE CUBAN, ETHIOPIAN AND OTHER FORCES. WILL YOU HELP US IN CASE OF ATTACK?"

9. AT THIS POINT, TO MOVE THE CONVERSATION FROM THE ABSTRACT TO THE CONCRETE AND FROM THE ALARMING TO THE REASSURING, COL. RUSZKIEWICZ PRESENTED SALIH WITH THE LIST OF QUESTIONS WHICH USMTM HAD ASKED US TO PUT TO THE YAR AS A PRELIMINARY TO PREPARING A LETTER OF OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE FOR AN F-5 PROGRAM AS THE SAUDIS HAVE REQUESTED. AS WE WENT THROUGH THE QUESTIONS INQUIRING ABOUT THE BACKGROUND OF PILOTS AND THEIR ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH AND THEIR AVAILABILITY FOR TRAINING, SALIH SAW CLEARLY THAT STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN IN A PROGRAM DEAR TO HIS HEART. I THEN SAID THAT THIS KIND OF DETAIL WAS NECESSARY TO PREPARE A PROGRAM WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE TO PROCEED THROUGH A NUMBER OF STAGES, EACH FOCUSED ON PARTICULAR AREAS LIKE THE AIR FORCE, ARTILLERY, ANTI-AIR DEFENSE AND ANTI-TANK DEFENSE. I SAID KEY WAS TRAINING AND WE LOOK TO HIM FOR HELP IN NOMINATING GOOD OFFICERS FOR TRAINING IN THE USA. I SAID I WOULD BE MAKING MORE REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND SUGGESTED THAT COL. RUSZKIEWICZ SEE AIR FORCE COMMANDER DAYFALLAH RE INFORMATION REQUESTED ON F-5 LOA. SALIH SAID, HOWEVER, THAT HE, SALIH, WOULD PROVIDE US WITH INFORMATION.

10. TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT TO ANOTHER MATTER WHERE WE COULD BE FORTHCOMING IN THE AREA OF CONCERN TO HIM, I NOTED THAT DIA HAD OBTAINED AN EXCEPTION TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO HIM ON FORCES IN SOUTH YEMEN. I SAID I DID NOT THINK WE WOULD HAVE MUCH MORE INFORMATION THAN I HAD ALREADY PROVIDED BUT HE COULD TAKE SATISFACTION IN KNOWING WE WOULD GIVE HIM WHATEVER WE HAD IN THIS AREA. SALIH WAS GRATIFIED BUT PARADOXICALLY, IN VIEW OF HIS GREAT INTEREST IN THIS SUB-

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JECT IN OUR FIRST MEETING ON 26 JUNE, HE SEEMED RELATIVELY DISINTERESTED NOW. HE SAID HE HAD EVERYTHING HE NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT THE SOUTH YEMENI ARMY FROM THE DEFECTORS WHO HAD COME ACROSS THE BORDER BUT HE WELCOMED ANY INFORMATION WE

COULD SUBSEQUENTLY PROVIDE HIM AS A CHECK ON HIS OWN FIGURES. HE SAID US FIGURES TO DATE HAD PROVEN VERY ACCURATE AND HE WAS PLEASED. HE THEN DIRECTED HIS STAFF AIDE TO PRODUCE THE FOLDER ON INTELLIGENCE ON SOUTH YEMEN FORCES (SEPTTEL).

11. COMMENT: SALIH'S CONCERN FOR A CONSPICUOUS AND DIRECT US ROLE IN MILITARY MODERNIZATION IS UNDERSTANDABLE AND, IN LIGHT OF SAUDI ADMINISTRATIVE SHORTCOMINGS TO DATE, PROBABLY INEVITABLE IF WE WANT PROGRAM TO WORK IN EVEN THE MOST LIMITED FASHION. HOWEVER, HIS IDEAS ON WHAT YEMEN NEEDS ARE CLEARLY NOT RPT NOT WELL DEFINED AND FAR BEYOND THE ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY OF THIS GOVERNMENT. TO PROVIDE THE YAR WITH THE EQUIVALENT OF THE 11 BRIGADES AND OVER 100 ATTACK AIRCRAFT WHICH ARE DEPLOYED IN THE SOUTH IS, IN MY VIEW, UNWORKABLE. WE HAVE, HOWEVER, ESTABLISHED GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH SALIH, ONE IN WHICH YEMENI NEEDS AND FOREIGN RESPONSES CAN BE SHAPED TO SIZE AND FITTED TOGETHER. DEPARTMENT SHOULD NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT BEYOND QUESTION OF HARDWARE, SALIH IS ASKING FOR POLITICAL COMMITMENT IN THE CONSPICUOUS FORM OF NEW AGREEMENTS AND A SIZABLE USG PRESENCE IN THE YAR. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THESE QUESTIONS WERE LINKED IN HIS MIND TO THE YEMENI ABILITY TO DISPOSE OF SOVIETS HERE (SEE SEPTTEL) AS WELL AS TO DETER THEM AND THEIR CLIENTS IN SOUTH YEMEN. FINALLY, TO JUDGE BY DISINTEREST IN OB INFORMATION, YAR THINKING HAS CRYSTALLIZED AROUND DETERRENCE NOT ATTACK.
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